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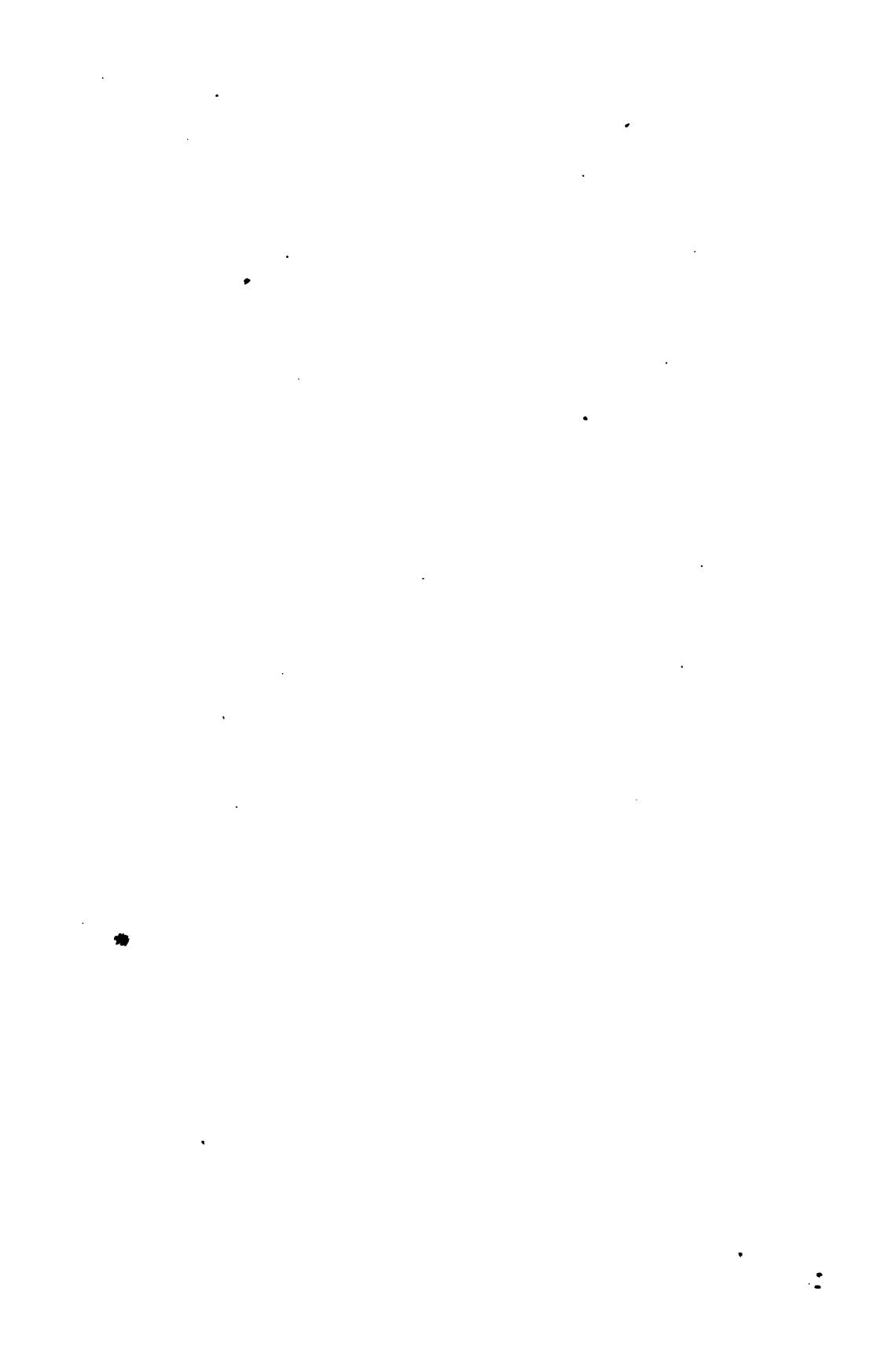
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MAN'S LIFE AND DESTINY,
BY THE
REV^D G. A. MACDONNELL, B.A.







MAN'S LIFE AND DESTINY.

F O U R S E R M O N S

PREACHED IN THE DISTRICT CHURCH

OF

ST. PETER, WALWORTH.

BY

GEORGE ALCOCK MACDONNELL, B.A.,

CURATE IN CHARGE OF ST. MARK'S DISTRICT, WALWORTH.

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TO
PAUL NINNIS, ESQ.,
I DEDICATE
THESE SERMONS,
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF VERY VALUABLE SERVICES RENDERED BY HIM
TO ME,
AND TO THE DISTRICT IN WHICH I NOW LABOUR
AS A MINISTER.

G. A. M.

Easter 1861.



P R E F A C E.

“To justify the ways of God to men,” to show that infinite justice, mercy, and love were, and are exhibited to man, in his Edenic, and in his fallen condition, is the object of the following discourses. This subject lies at the root of religion. If not examined into, and to some extent apprehended, life is a mystery that perplexes and saddens, and God is not felt to be what He is—our Father which is in Heaven—one who has done all things well, all things for our good, and therefore for our real happiness.

Were this subject to receive the attention it demands and requires, not merely would men’s minds be less anxious and less complaining, but their hearts would abound in love to “the Author and Giver of all good things,” and their lives would exhibit more abundantly the fruits of the Holy Spirit. But, important as this subject is, it is seldom discussed in its entirety and its practical bearing. This I have endeavoured to do, briefly, in the following discourses. I should not have presumed to print them of my own accord; but inasmuch as the Churchwardens, and many other members of St. Peter’s congregation, requested me to publish them, believing that good would result from my doing so, I, after some hesitation, deemed it right to comply with their request. If what I have written leads any man into such a train of thought as shall eventuate in his seeing his true relationship to God, and resolving to love and serve Him more than in time past, the object of my writing will be achieved, and the highest reward I seek, or could seek, be gained.

G. A. M.

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S E R M O N S.

S E R M O N I.

ADAM'S LIFE IN PARADISE.

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed."—GENESIS, Chapter II., Verse 8.

I PROPOSE, in this and the following discourses, to set before you the life of man in its connexion with the past and future; for it is only when so viewed that our life ceases to be an enigma, such as it has always been to thinking men not blessed with revelation.

Our life is full of those elements which go to make it anything but happy; yet it was given to us by One, who, we believe, had unbounded love for our race, and power to make us happy beyond what we can conceive. Did the Creator so love man? Had He such power? Then why is human life the sad reality which we know it to be? Why such a life from such a Creator? To answer this question—to reconcile the apparent inconsistency on our Maker's part—we must remember that, as revelation informs us, our

present life is abnormal: it is not that which God made it; it is not that which He willed it to be. In considering man as a result of God's creative power, we must in all fairness consider him such as he was when God first called him into being; and if his condition then was such as we should expect that an all-loving and all-powerful God would make it, and if we can show that that condition has changed for the worse, not owing to anything that God has willed or done, but owing to man's unfaithfulness to his own nature, then we must acquit our Creator of all injustice and unlovingness towards our race, and charge to our own account whatever in our present life is distasteful to our minds and saddening to our hearts.

God's power and love are abundantly evidenced in the life with which He endowed man at the beginning—in His using Himself, and not even the highest of the angelic order, to be the model after which to image Adam,—in His constituting man lord of the new world which He made for him, and in which He placed him,—in His doing everything in connexion with this world and man's creation Himself directly, and not through the agency of His ministers,—in His planting as it were with His own hand the garden that was to be man's home.

But here comes the question which puzzles not a few—the question, how is it that man's life is no longer what it was? How came it to pass that God permitted or caused that life to change? Desiring

to honour and love the race, why did not God make man so that he would be ever worthy of that honour and love, and therefore be ever happy? Why did He make Adam's retention of Paradisiacal life conditional; and conditional upon obedience to a command, not founded upon what we call any moral law?

Now those who ask these questions clearly imply that God, as intending to confer honour and bestow happiness on our race, ought to have made men greater and happier than He did—ought to have made us angels at once, and placed us by His side in heaven. Well, suppose He had made us at once equal to the angels, and that we, in all essential matters, resembled those glorious beings; then (we know from the case of Satan and his followers), as angels were capable of sinning, and liable to eternal expulsion from heaven, we should have resembled them in that respect. This being the case, was it not an act of great love on the Creator's part, to form man and place him in such a condition, that if only true to his nature, and obedient to a certain command, he should be translated to heaven, the grandest of all the worlds, and once enrolled among the shining ranks there, should be incapable of sinning, incapable of corrupting his glorious nature and losing his infinite happiness?

Now angels, the sacred record implies, were originally created for heaven. They passed through no probationary course to fit them for God's highest world. It was their first estate which those of them who sinned kept not. So created then, some of them

sinned, and were cast out from heaven, never to be admitted again. Man, on the other hand, was first formed for, and sent into a probationary world, to prepare him for the highest state of existence ; and when once translated to that state, shall be no more capable of sinning—shall never be separated from God. Is it not clear then, that the probationary, preparatory life was assigned to man for the purpose of securing to him, in permanence, the highest state of happiness when once obtained ? If so, then God's assigning to man a probationary life—not life at once in heaven, as He did to the angels—was a great blessing—the greatest, as far as we can see, which it was in the Divine power to give. God so made man, that upon his entering heaven it would be an entering upon eternal life ; whereas His making man an angel at once in heaven would have precluded this ingredient of eternity from necessarily belonging to his heavenly life.

Further, man was so made, that if he was untrue to his nature, if he was thrust down to the kingdom of Satan, his punishment would not be so severe as that of a sinning angel, for his fall would not be so great ; he would only fall from earth to hell, whereas in the other case he would fall from heaven to hell. Man's life then, as he was when first made, was better than that of the angels as originally constituted.

I know it may be objected to what I have adduced, that I have assumed that Adam, had he been obedient to the Divine command, would have been translated

to heaven, and permanently settled there; whereas the book of Genesis does not say a word on the subject, and the New Testament frequently declares eternal life to be the gift of God through Jesus Christ. To this I reply, that Adam was placed in a probationary state—was so placed to fit him for a certain life, which life could not have been that which he was enjoying, because he was already fit for it. God Himself had pronounced him to be very good. Further, as Scripture informs us that the consequences of disobedience on Adam's part were to be disastrous in the extreme, involving more than the mere expulsion from Eden, so may it be fairly inferred that the consequences of obedience were to be beneficial in the extreme, involving more than his mere continuance in Eden; that as by disobedience man was to sink, so by obedience he was to rise.

Further, Scripture, in many passages, directly declares that man was destined from the beginning of the world for the eternal life of heaven. As to man's eternal life being declared in the New Testament to be God's gift through Jesus Christ, this declaration is made with special reference to the fact of our being sinners needing a Saviour, and having found one. Christ is indeed the giver of this life to us, but the life itself was prepared for man from the foundation of the world — therefore prepared for Adam, and to have been entered upon by him, had he proved himself worthy of it.

We find then that Adam, the representative of our

race, was placed in Paradise on his trial ; and this, in order that, if true to himself and faithful to God, he might be translated to heaven, and once there, live for ever in the presence of God. Adam then was to be tried. His nature admitted of it, and God suited the trial to his nature. As Adam was pure and stainless, no element of evil in him, no doubt it would have been impossible for him to break any moral law ; therefore to have made his future life dependent upon his not breaking such, would have been to eliminate the probationary element from his existence : not until sin became part of human nature, could man break any moral law ; but Adam might, as the event proved, disobey a command, the obligation to obey which arose only from the will of the sacred lawgiver. Therefore God forbade Adam to eat the fruit of a certain tree, and informed him that his future depended upon how he acted in this matter. They who think it foolish and unjust that God should have issued such a command, and punished, as He did, disobedience to it, must, from what has just been said, see that the Creator put the only sort of test that it was possible for Him to put to Adam's faith, and that the punishment inflicted was for the only sort of unworthy act towards God which it was in Adam's power to commit. Such then was man's God-given life : a life great, happy, beyond that which now is —a life the best for man as far as we can see ; not the best in itself, but the best as being the means to an end which was the best ; the best, because it was

to lead to a world of infinite happiness, which, once entered, should be man's eternal home.

Let us praise and thank God that He made our first parents as He did, made man as He did; but let us not forget at the same time, that man's primeval life was probationary as ours; and because such, did not satisfy Adam, and would not satisfy us. It did not realize the aspirations of an immortal soul, nor gratify the longings of the human heart. True, it was a life exempt from nearly all those ills and sorrows which here beset our path and sadden our spirits. Then, there was no evil-tainted thought or act, no reproving conscience, no Heavenly Father frowning and punishing. Weighed down as we are with the heavy burden of sin and misery, we are too ready to look back to those infant days of our race with regret, and to wish that we had been born in them, as though that would suffice for our happiness.

But we are wrong; we make an unworthy estimate of ourselves; we eliminate the divine from man's nature and destiny. Adam's life we must not look back upon with envy, nor think that it would have satisfied us; it would not have satisfied us, and this just for the reasons that it did not satisfy Adam. It did not satisfy him, first, because it was a life which he might lose: over this truth must he have often pondered. Who can say that he did not often spend days and nights wandering about, almost distracted at the thought that he might incur God's wrath, and be

expelled from Paradise? Could he have looked out upon the beauty that surrounded him, and in upon the glory that was centred in himself, and have known that that beauty might one day be removed from his sight never more to gladden it, and that glory be tarnished and destroyed never more to be recovered; could he have thus known, thus acted, and not have often fixed his gaze upon the stars in the hope of piercing them with his eye, and reading the great secret of the future which lay hidden behind them; not have often prayed, in deepest agony of spirit, to his God and Maker to support him with Divine strength, and carry him safely through the temptation to which he was subjected? And even if that life in Paradise had been given to man as his for eternity, it would not have brought perfect happiness. For Adam was God's child, a child in Eden, but not in heaven; in Eden, where God came at times to hold communion with him; but not in that land where there is no need for such visits, because the children are all ever gathered round the Great Father's throne, ever basking in His loving smile. "In the presence of God there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore."

This truth David saw, and so he longed for heaven and felt he could not be happy in any other world. Adam too must have seen this same truth, and have felt accordingly; for surely his knowledge was not scantier, nor his aspirations narrower than David's.

To pass the pearl-gemmed gate of the celestial

Jerusalem, and dwell in the temple where God in His unveiled glory sits enthroned ; to see the omnipotent One as He is, in all His might, majesty, magnificence, and love ; yea, to be filled with all the fulness of Deity,—this was the destiny Adam saw awaiting him ; and, therefore, not Paradise with all its purity and innocence—and this even if assigned to him in perpetuity—would have satisfied his soul. That taking of the forbidden fruit in Paradise, what was it but the outcoming, in unrighteous form, of this desire of man for the perfect life of God ? It was Satan's knowledge of this desire and aspiration in man's heart that caused him to use the particular form of temptation he did, that is, to assure Eve that if she and her husband ate of the forbidden tree, they should be as gods.

Adam then, in the innocent life of Paradise, saw heaven in the distance, and longed for the day when it was to be his home. And we, my Christian brethren, we, sin-stained and degraded as we are, we too see heaven in the future, and cherish the like aspiration regarding it. That we do, in this respect, resemble our first parents as they were in Eden, is the result of God's special mercy, and of His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's death upon the cross for us. If then we turn back to the infant days of our race, let it not be with envious mind or repining heart, but simply that we may learn the nature of the life God gave to man, and learn why He so gave it ; rather onwards to the happier days in store for us let the eye stretch,

and for them let the soul long. When this dream-life is past and gone, and the everlasting life of heaven entered upon, it is then, and not till then, we, fully reinstamped with the image of the Eternal, never again to be effaced or marred, in a home-world perfectly harmonizing with our God-given nature, shall experience unalloyed satisfaction of mind, happiness infinite.

O God, mighty and loving, our Father in heaven, send, we pray Thee, for Jesus Christ's sake, thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we, now beholding thy presence in righteousness, may awake up after thy likeness, and so wearing it thenceforward for ever, be eternally and infinitely happy. Amen.

S E R M O N II.

ADAM'S DISOBEDIENCE, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES
TO HIM.

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."—
ROMANS, Chapter V., and part of 12th Verse.

IN my former discourse, I endeavoured to set before you the nature of the life which God gave to man. I proved to you that that life was the best, as the means to an end, which God could give; but still a life not the best in itself for man; therefore not a life which would afford complete satisfaction to us, were it assigned for a permanency in place of that which we now possess. Man's present life is different from that which he had in Paradise. Beyond all question it is a life of a lower order, of less happiness. I propose to consider in what respects it is different; how it came to be so; and to prove to you that God is not chargeable with injustice or want of love towards our race, in that He has caused, or permitted a change to take place.

As the change referred to began with Adam, and through him has been transmitted and continued to us, it behoves us to consider the subject, first with reference to him, and then with reference to us, his descendants.

A change took place in Adam's life. What was that change? how was it effected? God is not blameable regarding it. These are the points I intend to consider. The change was this:—Adam, once a pure, became an impure being, and passed from a life into a death state. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” Such was the change: let us inquire how it was effected. How came Adam to be a sinner? He disobeyed God; that is, he sinned—Adam sinned! How was this possible? Was he not fashioned in the image of an infinitely pure God? was he not therefore himself perfectly pure? If a clean thing cannot come out of an unclean, seems it not natural to conclude that an unclean cannot come out of a clean? How then was the impure educed from Adam's pure nature? Surely this could not have occurred if a capability of sinning had not existed in man's original nature. But how could such a capability exist in a God-imaged being? The answer to this question seems to me to be this: that though Adam so perfectly resembled his Maker, that all the Divine was reflected in the human, yet those elements of the Divine which were without measure in God, were limited in man. In God there was infinite good of every description; in man, limited good—good capable of being exhausted. An incapability of erring or sinning can only belong to a Being of infinite attributes, of infinite power and goodness; that is, to God only. This incapability is, indeed, to belong to man in the eternal world; but this will not be owing to

anything in man of himself, but owing to the will and power of God. The fact, then, that man was created in the image of God, is not inconsistent with the fact that a capability of erring and sinning belonged to human nature from the first hour of its existence. This capability existing was developed into action in the following manner. Satan, the chief of certain angels who had sinned against God, and in consequence had been expelled from heaven, induced Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, and she then induced her husband to follow her example. It need not surprise us that Satan should have tempted Eve, and that he should have succeeded in causing her to succumb to his power. Hatred of God as the One who had punished him, jealousy of man as the one who had succeeded to the place in heaven forfeited by him, no doubt moved Satan to attempt to thwart God's designs, and to ruin our first parents.

He succeeded in his attempt, so far as man was concerned, because he was a stronger contending with a weaker power. His object was to ruin man. The only way in which he could effect this object was by causing man to disobey God, and thus draw upon himself God's wrath. If Satan could only make man believe that the forbidden fruit would, if eaten, benefit man, not injure him—give him larger life, not entail death, then Satan knew man would be induced to eat thereof, and so be ruined. There were many plausible reasons why man might, nay, even ought to eat of that fruit of the tree of knowledge,

which reasons no doubt Satan put in the most winning form, and enforced with the most subtle power. We may therefore suppose him speaking somewhat after this fashion:—"You may eat of this forbidden tree: for, if not, God would not have planted it in this garden, your home; if not, He would not have made it a tree pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise. Could One, who is all love, put poison amongst so many sweets? As to the death, which you say is to follow upon your eating of it, surely that threat will not be carried out by One, who, you know, has made you immortal? at all events, if I may draw any conclusions from what has taken place in my case, that threat is fallacious; for I have eaten of that fruit, and yet am alive, and feel myself even more powerful and happier than I was before I did so." By speaking and reasoning on this wise; by leading Eve to consider God's prohibitory command by itself; by keeping back from her view such considerations as might have neutralized his reasoning—considerations of God's truth, wisdom, justice—Satan prevailed on Eve to believe him, and accept him as her guide for a time. She found in him one very potent, one seemingly much interested in her welfare, one unwilling to withhold anything from her gratification—one wiser and better than herself. What wonder then, that for the moment, she being but of finite parts, of finite good, received him as a friend, and acted on his advice? And in all this, surely not an atom of blame, of want of justice or love, is fairly chargeable to the

great Creator of man. He had made Eve so that she could have resisted Satan's temptation ; her not doing so was her own fault.

But it may be said, why did God permit Satan to enter Paradise at all ? Why did not the omnipotent One annihilate Satan when He made man, or at least render him incapable of injuring man ? An omnipotent Being can do anything, why then did He not do this ?

To this we answer, that considering God to be what He is (as revealed to us), the designs He had in view, and the way in which He works out His designs, it may have been impossible or inexpedient for Him to act otherwise than He did act respecting Satan. Part of Satan's punishment may be this very power of tempting man to sin. Part of man's probation was the being exposed to such temptation. Satan may succeed, and so be, in one way, punished. Man may resist him, and so become worthier of, and fitter for a nobler life, a higher world. In all this God stands fully justified. Had God made man that he should necessarily succumb to Satan's power, we should be unable to reconcile the case with our notions of justice. But it was otherwise: from first to last it is clear, that the possibility of man's obedience was recognized by God.

And now a few words on man's condition after his transgressing. Having sinned, he became a sinner; that is, whereas previously his mind and heart saw good instinctively, and acted rightly in all things, his

mind now became obscured, so that it could not always see what was good, and was rather inclined to do evil than good. That is, man by one act tainted his nature with an ineradicable corruption. But, for this, God is not chargeable with injustice, or unlove towards man. This was but as the spontaneous development of a moral plague-spot, contracted when the heart first throbbed with an ungodly desire.

Further, he passed from a life- into a death-state—a death-state as regards his spiritual, his Divine nature. This may have been the necessary result of the act perpetrated,—a something which would have occurred even if God had not denounced it as the punishment of disobedience to Him ; and inasmuch as this may have been the case, and inasmuch as most certainly the death-state of man after sin was but the fulfilment of God's threat to Adam, we are not justified in pronouncing it inconsistent with God's justice and love. Thus can we see (which is all I hoped to lead you to see) that in this God's dealing with our first parents, God stands clear of all blame—fully justified. On this point we have very satisfactory testimony, even the testimony of one better qualified to form an opinion than the wisest of us, I mean Adam himself.

When he had eaten of the forbidden fruit ; when he felt the deterioration of his nature, in the shame that mantled his brow in consequence of what he had done, and the cowardice of spirit that caused him to shrink from meeting his God to give account of it ;

when he heard the awful sentence, which cursed the ground on his account, and which doomed his body to a return to its original elements ; when shortly after he was driven out from Paradise, and an irremovable barrier erected to prevent his return to it ;—as he passed thus from one step of misery to another, and saw before him, for his destiny, progressive and eternal misery, Adam did not find fault with God for any part of His dealings with him ; did not speak of his original condition as unfair, or inconsistent with God's love to him ; did not speak lightly of his sin ; did not find fault with the punishment, as too severe for the offence committed ; did not ask for his sin to be pardoned ; did not express a hope that at some future time it would be pardoned ;—no, Adam did not speak thus, and by his silence on these topics proclaimed that he had been fairly and lovingly dealt with from first to last. As this was the opinion of Adam, one so much better qualified to form a correct opinion than we are—one so likely (if it were by any means possible) to form a different opinion from what he did—surely we, with our scanty knowledge of the details of this transaction, with our ignorance of God as compared with Adam's knowledge, surely we have not a shadow of right to raise our puny voices and find fault with God's treatment of our first parents.

A corrupt nature, a death spiritual, eternal, were the consequences to Adam of his disobedience ; but that corruption was arrested ere it issued in universal

decay, that death eternal was not consummated. The expiring spark of life was revived, the heavy sentence borne in its heaviest part by other than the transgressors ; so borne, that there was no need for it to be necessarily borne by them. You know how this was effected. As Adam and Eve lay wounded grievously, with the curse of eternal death upon them, there came down from heaven One who had power to heal the deepest wounds, to do away even with an infinite curse. Into the wounds He poured oil and wine to assuage their smart, and prevent their festering ; and upon His own shoulders bore He away the curse that was crushing man. Thus did Christ, the eternal Son, act for our first parents. That parable of the good Samaritan revealed an act of His, in connexion with man, performed, so far as its effects were to reach, before ever He set visible foot upon this earth, and suffered the death of the cross.

He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world—slain for us—for all men—for Adam, the first, as well as for him who shall be the last.

O blessed and gracious God ! surely thy love was above and beyond all human love ! The thought of sin, that is, the sinful tendency of the heart, checked, and ultimately eradicated—the hope of Divine favour once more enjoyed, never entered the minds of our first parents. All that they knew of Thee forbade their entertaining such a thought, cherishing such a hope. They knew of thy justice ; but it proclaimed

death as the sinner's portion. They knew of thy love and wisdom; but their knowledge of those qualities suggested no means by which sin might be crushed, death averted, divine life restored. Ah! they knew not of a wisdom that could originate a plan, by which justice might be vindicated, yet the offenders spared; they knew not of a love, that could stoop from the glory and life of heaven to the shame and death of earth, in order to prevent the misery, and bring about the happiness of those who had trampled under foot the rarest gifts, who had evinced the foulest ingratitude. Of such a love, man neither had nor could have any conception. How could he indeed? It was not till sin had entered the world, that the love which could forgive sin, and remove its consequences, could be manifested and known. And why, think you, was this love, this God-love, for man, and for him alone? Satan and his followers sinned, and they died the death eternal. For them no heart throbbed warm with love; to them was stretched no helping hand. They fell, and fell never to rise again. Why for them this different treatment from that which man received? On this account: Satan sinned, but not owing to the temptation of an external agent. His sin was exclusively his own work; therefore was it just that he should rise, if at all, by the exercise of his own powers. His own powers were inadequate for this, therefore he shall never rise; he is irrecoverably, eternally fallen. But man sinned, owing to the temptation of an external agent; therefore was it just, or rather not inconsistent

with justice, that an external agent should interfere and give help. What here surprises us is, not that one interfered and helped; but that He, the Son of God, He dwelling from eternity in the heavens, He, the insulted one, condescended to behold the things that are on earth; loved the rebellious; helped them in the way He did. Thus do we see the sad consequences which man by his disobedience drew upon himself; and the wonderful love of God for man, which that disobedience evoked. In all this we see Divine justice and Divine love. In the, at all events, temporary blotting out of God's image from man's soul; in his life of exile from Paradise—a life of toil and sorrow, ending one stage of its existence in the return of the body to the earthly particles out of which it had originally been formed—in all this, we see that God's threats are no idle words, that justice ever vindicates her rights. But in Adam and Eve spared to live through many years after their sin; in their continuing to be objects of care and interest to the Almighty; in the promise given to them, that One, sprung from their blood, should ultimately be the conqueror of Satan, and restorer of their race; in the fact of that Saviour's work affecting their condition, before His work was fully accomplished; in all this, we recognise an infinite love on the part of God to man.

I leave with you this picture of God's justice and God's love. Justice, how fearfully—love, how splendidly illustrated! May that justice be the frequent theme of your meditations; that love the ceaseless

burden of your songs—yes, of your songs; for the love that was manifested for Adam and Eve has affected the condition of one and all of us! But for it, we either should not have existed at all, or we should have been born into another world than this—one where Satan is the king, and sin and evil the eternal portion of them that dwell therein. “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto Thee among the nations. . . . For the greatness of thy mercy reacheth unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.”

S E R M O N III.

ADAM'S DISOBEDIENCE AND CHRIST'S OBEDIENCE
—THEIR EFFECTS ON US.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."—ROMANS, Chapter V., Verse 19.

ADAM, we have seen, by disobedience to God's command, imbibed a corrupt nature, and became the heir of everlasting death ; but, further, by this act of his, he placed all his descendants in the same position as himself ; so that all men are born into the world sin-stained and death-doomed. This is by nature the condition of all. I propose to show you that this is the case ; and yet, that we are not, on this account, justified in impugning the justice, or denying the love of God.

That we are all born into this world sinners, is abundantly declared in Scripture, and is verified most fully by human experience. The first three chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans are conclusive as to the truth, that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin ; and when we come to look into the character of those we meet, and into our own hearts, we see that not one is stainless—is such that the eye of an all-pure Being could rest on him, and discern

no taint. The words and actions then of all exhibiting at some time or other, in greater or less degree, sin, we cannot for a moment doubt that sin is incorporated with each man from the hour of his birth; for universal sinful fruits demonstrate the existence of a universal sinful seed. And though this argument is not applicable to infants, yet they are not thereby proved sinless. The non-existence of *actual* sin in their case does not prove the non-existence of a sinful principle. Infants, if spared to grow up to be children, do commit actual sins; all do so; therefore may it fairly be inferred that there is resident in them all, from the hour of their birth, a principle, which only needs time and circumstances for its development into actual sin: even as from the universal cunning of the fox, the universal sagacity of the dog, the universal courage of the lion, we come to believe cunning, sagacity, courage to be universal elements in these respective animals; so that their young are with truth said to possess these elements even before they have exhibited any symptoms of their indwelling. We find, then, that Scripture declares, and human observation witnesses to the fact, "that our life is a false nature; 'tis not in the harmony of things." Scripture further reveals how this came to be the condition of us all, even because we are the descendants of one who disobeyed God; who was false to his nature; who became sinful, and so entailed a corrupt nature on his descendants. Because Adam, a sinner, begat us, therefore he begat us sinners. "By one man sin entered

into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Here is the Scripture revelation as to how we became sinners. Here too do we read, that we are all death-doomed because sin-stained ; and this too owing to Adam, independently of our own acts. "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."

Now this our condition, the result of Adam's disobedience, *seems* inconsistent with God's justice and His love for man ; but it is not inconsistent. We are sinners because the descendants of a sinner ; but, then, God did not make the first man a sinner, nor place him in such a position that he should necessarily become a sinner. Nor did God, because Adam sinned, from spite or hatred to the race, make all men sinners. There is nothing in Scripture to justify an assumption of this nature.

We see sin in all men ; we learn from Scripture that sin entered into the world by one man, and has been transmitted by him to all his descendants, without one exception.

All this is but the necessary consequence of the nature of sin. This our condition is but our inheriting a disease, so malignant, that it necessarily transmitted itself ; so malignant, that its strength has not been abated by its passage through thousands and millions before it reached us. This our condition is but an illustration of a great general principle which obtains in the world at large, namely, that that which produces should communicate to the thing produced its essential

characteristics. The bitter tree producing the bitter seedling, the ferocious animal begetting offspring of a like ferocious nature, are analogous to Adam sinful begetting us children sinful. As our condition then is the development of a principle that is carried out in other departments of nature, we have no right to complain of our condition as unjust; as our condition as sinners is not in any way the result of God's work, we have no right to charge God with want of justice or love on account of our being what we are.

But, further, we all come into the world death-doomed; death-doomed because sin-stained. Yonder little helpless babe, to the eye of man all innocence and purity, and worthy of the love of angels, is in the sight of God a guilty object, the born heir of everlasting death. A few years, or months, or days, and it will vanish for ever from this earth. This happens because it is one of the "all who have sinned," and upon whom therefore death passes. But if you reply, that infant has never sinned; therefore death ought not to pass on it; I rejoin, that God's Word tells us it has: it matters but little how or when, in Adam or in itself; sinned it has, a sinner it is, and therefore a sinner's destiny is its portion by nature. Now, if we will reflect a moment, the justice of this portion will be unmistakeably evident. That infant has probably committed no actual sins; but if it lives to a certain age, it will undoubtedly commit actual sin: its not doing so, then, depends upon its not living long enough to be able to do so; its not living long enough depends upon

the will of God; therefore there is nothing in its case so differencing it from the case of an adult, as to entitle it to exemption from the guilt and punishment which belong to the actual transgressor. But perhaps you will say, even actual transgressors ought not to be considered guilty, or be punished, inasmuch as their sins are the necessary outcomings of an inherited, corrupt nature. You say, I grant that I am proud, or sensual, or hypocritical, or covetous, or jealous, or mean-spirited, or ill-tempered, or even a doer of sin in its grosser forms; but, then, this is all owing to my nature as transmitted to me by Adam; and therefore I ought not to be considered guilty, or be doomed to death. To this the answer is, that though all men are born with the inclination or desire to sin, yet they are not so born that they must necessarily sin, whether they wish it or not. The being born with a sin-tainted nature is of necessity the condition of all, independently of their will; the actual outcomings of sin depend upon their will. For these, then, men are justly accountable. We so act, all of us, as to demonstrate that we believe in this accountableness. Thus, when others act ill, act so as to injure or annoy us, do we not pronounce them culpable? are we not indignant with them? do we not imperiously demand reparation, or proceed to inflict punishment? We do not, at such a moment, even think of the vitiated nature of the evil-doer; much less allow that his condition by nature should do away with his guilt—be a satisfactory excuse for it, or even a palliation of it. No, we look

to the act, and endeavour to discern the motive which prompted it. We then designate it right or wrong, and we then pronounce the individual guilty or not, and act accordingly. And if we so act towards others, and if we are justified in so acting—and the universal voice of humanity proclaims us to be so justified—then let us bethink ourselves whether we have any right to expect that God will hold the fact of our being born with corrupted natures to be abrogatory of the guilt of our offence, seeing we do not hold that fact to be of the slightest moment in our estimate of the actions of our fellow-men. “O man, thou art inexcusable, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself.” Our being born guilty, and heirs of death, is, we see then, not inconsistent with God’s justice and His love for us.

But God’s blamelessness as respects our condition becomes wonderfully clear when we reflect upon the following fact; namely, that, side by side with those Scripture passages which declare sin and death to be the consequences to us of Adam’s transgression, we find passages which declare these consequences to be fully neutralized by the death of Christ. In verses 15 to 20 of this chapter for instance, St. Paul institutes a comparison between the work of Adam and that of Christ, as they affect us; and informs us, that Christ’s work more than counterbalances Adam’s. If, then, in these verses we find a sinful nature, guilt, and death, to be the consequences of Adam’s sin (as I believe we do), we must then find a new nature, justification,

and life eternal, to be the fruits of Christ's obedience. And if we find in these verses (as some think they do) a declaration that we are all to answer at the bar of God's judgment for Adam's individual transgression, then we must also find in them a declaration of a something derived to us from Christ, which does away with this liability. I rather think that in these verses, where we are said to suffer for Adam's guilt, the meaning is, that from Adam we inherit a corruption, which places us in a guilt equal to that of Adam's. I think we ought not to look upon ourselves as guilty, and worthy of death, apart from the fact of our being born with a sinful nature.

We owe, then, sin and death to Adam, but righteousness and life to Christ. Even if God then were the author of our condition; if we could look up to Him, and say with truth—It is Thou, Lord, who hast made us sinners; even then we should not be justified in finding fault with Him, as a breaker of the laws of justice and love; seeing that, on Christ's account, we may stand at last in the Divine presence, righteous, and worthy of life eternal. Observe, too, God's special love manifested in the work of Christ. Our condition as children of Adam is the necessary and natural result of things; whereas our condition owing to the work of Christ is the result of God's grace—is the result of God's having had, and exhibited, a supernatural love for man. “If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath

abounded unto many." Observe, too, that whereas judgment was by one (offence) to condemnation, the free gift is of many offences unto justification ;—that is, whereas the condemnation we derive from Adam comes upon us because of his one offence ; the free gift of justification, which we derive from Jesus Christ, justifies from the guilt in which we are born, *and from that which attaches to us on account of our actual transgressions.* We may think it not perfectly accordant with our ideas of justice, that we should be pronounced guilty, and be treated as such, before we even knew right from wrong, much less have acted wrong ; but when we have done wrong, we acknowledge the justice of the consequences that ensue. But God's justice, His mercy and His love come out into very bold relief indeed, when we learn that Christ's obedience not merely removes the former, but also the latter guilt.

If we believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as the fulfiller of God's holy law, as the sufferer in our stead and that of the whole world, as the remover of our guilt, and the purchaser of the heavenly life for us, then guilt will be no more imputed to us, nor condemnation rest upon our heads. The awful result to us of Adam's disobedience will be done away with, and God the Father and the Son will also pour into our hearts the Holy Spirit, to enable us to hold in check the sinful tendency of our hearts, and at the last crush it out altogether.

Do you then really think your condition as sinners,

as guilty, as death-doomed beings, a hard condition ? Does this your condition pain you ? does it dissatisfy you ? Surely then you wish to rise out of that condition ; you wish for release from your pain ; you wish for a nobler and happier life. Come then to God, your Creator and Father in heaven, tell Him your mind and desire ; ask—pray humbly and faithfully for His help. Say, I see, O God, that death is by nature my destiny, that sin has its roots in my heart. O turn that death into life, that root of sin into a root of righteousness. Act thus, and your prayer will be heard and responded to. This does God promise and assure us of.

But if you act not thus ; if you feel your condition to be a hard condition ; if you complain respecting it against God, yet use not the means which God has appointed, whereby you may rise out of that condition—have all its evils neutralized ; then it must be that you complain only because you are trying to persuade yourself and others that God is wholly or in part accountable for the unrighteous acts in which your corrupt nature develops itself ; then it must be that you are a hypocrite, for in your heart you prefer to retain the evil, of which, with your lips, you complain ; and so at the last, when God judges you and condemns you for your sinful outcomings, will He not be “justified when He speaketh, and clear when He judgeth” ?

Away then, and away for ever, with all complaining as to your condition ; away with all hypocrisy. You

know your condition ; you know how it came to be what it is. You know, too, how it may be far different ; you know how it may be all you can desire ; nay, more even than that, grander than ever the soul's eye imaged, happier than ever the heart longed for. Thank God that this is the case. Thank Him daily, hourly ; thank Him with all your heart, and soul, and strength. Thank Him, by doing manfully, joyfully, lovingly the work He has given you to do ; by living for Him, for His glory, and the good of those about you. Thank Him, seeing that after a few years' sojourn in this world, a few years' struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, you shall pass to a land of peace and joy ; and at the last, when the Blessed Redeemer comes to set up His everlasting Kingdom, the corruptible in you shall wholly put on incorruption—the mortal immortality—death shall be swallowed up in victory. “ O Death, where is thy sting ? O Grave, where is thy victory ? ”

S E R M O N IV.

OUR DESTINY AFTER DEATH.

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was ; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”—*ECCLESIASTES*, Chapter XII., Verse 7.

THE subject to which I now desire to direct your attention is—what is to be our condition after death ? “When the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl broken”—what then ? “Then,” says Solomon, “shall the dust (or body) return to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it.” At death, the body returns to the dust, out of which it was originally formed : the soul returns to Him, from whom it originally issued. The soul needs for its existence in this present world such a framework as our bodies afford ; but when it passes away to another, a spiritual world, then a purely spiritual organism suffices for its existence. Indeed, unless the body became a glorified spiritual body, it could not (we may fairly presume) exist in a spiritual world. It is not to become such until Christ comes to judge men, and “changes their vile bodies that they may be like unto His own glorious body ;” and, therefore, at death, as the soul soars into a purely spiritual sphere, the body, unfit

in its present state for that sphere, becomes detached from the soul, from the vital principle, and resolves itself into the earthly elements of which it is composed. It is supposed by some, that at death the soul shares the fate of the body, or at all events lapses for a time into a state of unconsciousness. Neither reason nor Holy Scripture favours such a supposition. Reason does not ; for it does not know what death is ; and all it can say on the subject is, that as the loss of a limb, nay, the total change of the corporeal elements, which is believed to take place every seven years, does not affect the soul, so as to lessen or destroy its consciousness ; and as death is in numberless instances preceded by no diminution of the intellectual faculties, or spiritual powers ; therefore it may be, that the separation of the entire body from the soul by one stroke, in an instant, may not in any way affect the soul, so as to destroy it, or cause it to fall into a state of temporary unconsciousness. Neither does Scripture favour such a supposition. Some passages, however, are adduced in favour of it ; but they all can be shown to be by no means inconsistent with the opposite belief. Thus, Psalm vi., verses 5 & 6, “ In death there is no remembrance of Thee : in the grave (*sheol*) who shall give Thee thanks ? ”—though seemingly a passage indicating that when the body dies the soul becomes unconscious, yet, read with the context—admits of, if indeed it does not bring out, quite a different meaning. In this psalm, David, sore-vexed in his soul, entreats God to deliver him, and to save him for His mercies’

sake ; "for," says he, "in death there is no remembrance of Thee." That is, David prays to God, " Show thy mercies to me now, so as to make and keep me what I ought to be; for if Thou do not, then, dying with an unrenewed nature, passing to a world where no mercies from Thee are vouchsafed, I cannot of course receive any, and so cannot render any thanks unto Thee." Again, Ecclesiastes, chapter ix. verse 10, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest," is preceded by verse 6, "neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." And so the whole passage means, that the dead cease to have any knowledge of, or portion in this world.

But even if these, and other similar passages of Scripture, are not capable of such a meaning as I have put upon them, yet they would not go to prove that the soul becomes unconscious when the body dies; but only this,—that the writers of those words had such a dim vision of the future, that though they believed in a future resurrection, they had no certain knowledge of the condition into which men passed immediately on leaving this world. Moreover the condition of men after death, previously to the coming of Christ, may have been very different from what it has been since He came, and suffered, and went and preached unto the spirits in prison. Certainly we ought not to wonder at obscurities or ignorance respecting the future in the writers of the Old Testament; nor ought we to be guided in our belief by their

remarks upon this subject, seeing that we are expressly told, that it was Christ who has “brought life and immortality to light;” that it was He, and no one before Him, made such a revelation to man, that now he has a most sure knowledge that he is to live for ever in some other world, and that his consciousness is not to be destroyed or disturbed by the death of the body.

But some assert, that even the New Testament has passages which prove, that when the body dies, the soul becomes unconscious. The passages referred to are those which speak of death as a sleep; but from this fact, the conclusion cannot be drawn, that death is a ceasing of the soul to exist, to have a conscious existence: for though death is at times described as a sleep, yet this is only in respect of one of its phases. It is sleep, but it is more than sleep. It is not always spoken of as sleep; it is likewise a being in Paradise—a being with Christ. It is only because death brings to the Christian rest from toil and sorrow; because it removes him from this probationary scene, and translates him to a world, where he is refreshed after the labours of this life, and strengthened and purified for the eternal life of heaven; it is for these reasons that death is at times designated sleep. There is, then, nothing, taught by reason or Scripture, inconsistent with the belief, that man retains a conscious existence after death. But here we must not fall into a very mischievous error, and one by no means uncommon,—that of supposing that when the body dies, the soul returns to God, to be judged, to have its eternal

destiny pronounced, and to take up its abode in heaven or hell. The following facts, frequently stated in Scripture, negative such a supposition. The judgment which is to be followed by those mighty results, is not to be passed till the end of the world comes. That judgment is to be a universal judgment, one for all men gathered together at the same time before God's angel-circled throne, and, therefore, not for each separately, at the time of death. That judgment is to be presided over by Christ ; for to Him hath the Father committed all judgment ; but now is He ever engaged in the intercessorial work at the right hand of the Majesty on high : not till that work is completed, that is, not till this world ends, and man no longer needs an advocate before God, not till then will Christ assume the office of the Judge, exalt to heaven or thrust down to hell.

What then is to be man's condition or life, between the day of his death and the day of judgment ? He is in an intermediate state, that which is designated *sheol* in the Old Testament, and *hades* in the New. Sheol or Hades is commonly rendered in our translation of the Bible, 'hell,' or 'the grave'; but it properly signifies the world of departed spirits. It is always spoken of as a place separate and distinct from the grave in which the body is buried, and the hell, or Gehenna, into which the body and soul of the wicked are to be cast after the day of judgment. This Hades, or invisible region, seems to have some places of torment and some of great happiness. Thus the rich man

died and was buried, and in Hades he lift up his eyes, being in torments. But Lazarus died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. The thief that was crucified by our Saviour's side, died, and went at once to be with Christ in Paradise. Hades, then, is, as it were, some great, chaotic, sin-ravaged world ; but in it, a blooming garden of Eden. Into this garden-world the righteous at death pass, to enter into communion with the departed righteous, and to enjoy a happiness such as they never knew here ; and into the Hades external to that garden the ungodly at death pass, to know misery more exquisite than any they experienced here. And these things being so, surely, however the ungodly may shrink from death, and cling to this present life, if he is determined to live on in sin, and in rejection of the Gospel ; surely on the Christian's part there ought to be no ignoble clinging to this life, no cowardly shrinking from the life to come. The Christian's going hence is indeed attended by many painful circumstances ; but they are the throes which usher in the grander life ; death is to him but his withdrawing from the field of battle, and throwing away the weapons of warfare, because the victory is won, and there are no more enemies to be conquered. Death is to him but the gate through which he passes, in order to lie down in the green pastures, and wander by the side of the still waters.

And why, may we reasonably suppose, is this intermediate state for man ? It is that the Christian may be fitted for the heaven, where God has His throne ;

the ungodly, for the hell where Satan rules. The best Christian must know, that when he dies, sin is still in his nature, and therefore he is still unfit for God's presence, in whose eyes the very heavens themselves are not clean. The ungodly man, on the other hand, however corrupt his nature and bad his conduct, finds some marks of a human nature about him, and so is apt to think (and rightly so, it seems to me) that he is scarcely wicked enough for the hell, where Satan and other spirits of unmixed, of infinite wickedness, have their abode; but if there be an intermediate state, in which the Christian acquires the necessary fitness for the heaven of heavens, and in which the ungodly acquires the necessary fitness for the world of eternal woe, then the Christian will find in this truth consolation, and the ungodly man find an awful warning.

Let me now prove, that in the intermediate state, the necessary fitness for the respective spheres will be acquired.

“For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” These are St. Paul’s words. This holy Apostle had Christ in this life, was united to Him by faith, through the Holy Spirit; but after death, he was to be so much more with Christ, to have so close a union with Him, that the being with Christ which he had in this life, as compared with that future being, was not worthy to be called a being with Him at all. Being then thus with Christ; having a clearer vision of

heavenly things then, with no world to tempt, no fleshly lusts to be gratified ; whatever of good is in a man, by God's grace, when he dies, will be continuously and progressively educed—whatever of evil, be, on the other hand, crushed and diminished ; and so, going forward from a holy to a holier condition, the Christian will at last come to be an object meet for the God of holiness to look at, and so be translated from the holy place to the holy of holies, there to reign and minister as a king and priest unto God and the Father for ever.

On the other hand, the ungodly will grow more and more ungodly than he has been here. In the grave there is no repentance. There, no Christ mediates, no Holy Spirit illumines and sanctifies, no God loves or is gracious. The evil principle of the ungodly man's heart, uninfluenced by the divine agencies which act on it in this life, and restrain it somewhat, will then become more and more developed, till at the last it taints the man's being to the heart's core, and stamps out even the smallest spark of moral good that glimmered in his soul ; and then will the ungodly be fit for the companionship of Satan, and to it be consigned. But remember, my dear brethren, that on the day of your death, your destiny throughout eternity is settled. In a saved or unsaved state shall you die ; in a saved or unsaved state shall you continue for ever. Abraham's bosom, or the Hades of torments, is to be your abode ; and there is no passing from the one place to the other. A great gulf fixed between them renders

any passing to and fro impossible. Remember, you either go hence to be for ever free from pain and sorrow—to be for ever with the good and happy—to have for your companions the christian friends whom here you knew and loved, and many whom you did not know—to grow daily more and more like your God and Saviour, and so at the last to be exalted to the full glory and bliss of the infinite heaven ; or you go hence to be for ever plunged in sorrow and distracted by pain—to be for ever with the wicked and miserable, whom you will hate—to grow daily more and more like the Evil One, and at the last to be cast into the awful abyss where “ misery unspeakable both in degree and duration ” will be your lot.

Your *eternal* future then depends upon your conduct now.

Now is the time to work out for yourselves, with God’s grace, the nobler and happier life,—now, ere the soul is separated from the body : for *now*, and *only now*, God waits to be gracious ; *now* Christ’s atoning work is all-sufficient for the worst of sinners if he repents ; *now* the Holy Spirit’s help is all-powerful. “ O seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. . . . Work while it is called today ; the night cometh ” (sad night for the unrepentant ! for upon it rises no sun for them)—then, “ then no man can work.”

THE END.



